

Performance Measures Beyond the Mainstream: Possible Ways to Consider Health in Project Prioritization, NCDOT and NC State University

Background

On June 20, 2014 the Transportation Research Board's Statewide Multimodal Planning Committee partnered with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) to hold a one-day peer exchange in Scottsdale, Arizona on performance measurement of accessibility, economic development, and health impacts of transportation. Frank Gallivan of ICF International and David Wasserman of the North Carolina DOT presented on the topic of health.

Overview

Health is a relatively new topic area for transportation agencies. There are many aspects of public health that are related to transportation, including active living and fitness, obesity, cardiovascular disease, communicable/infectious disease, health care, mental health, nutrition/healthy eating, senior independence/aging, respiratory/pulmonary disease, and transportation-related injuries.

North Carolina DOT includes a reference to healthy communities in its mission statement and core principles. These are realized through the agency's Project Prioritization process.

NCDOT, in partnership with North Carolina State University, conducted research on health-based performance measures that could be used in NCDOT's Project Prioritization system for specific modes:

- For highway projects
 - Human exposure to air pollutants from transportation
- For bicycle and pedestrian projects
 - Bicycle, pedestrian, and transit mode share
 - County Level Health Equity Index
- For transit projects
 - Percent of population within ½ mile of a transit stop
 - Transit mode share
 - County Level Health Equity Index

These measures were drawn from examples in use at other transportation, health, and environmental agencies, and were assessed based on two criteria:

- data availability
- simplicity of analysis methodology

Explicit health measures have not been incorporated in NCDOT's project prioritization at this point, but Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations in North Carolina have the option to include health measures in their own project prioritization processes.



Challenges and Considerations in Implementation

Common challenges and opportunities for all transportation agencies considering health include:

- forecasting and quantifying behavioral change
- comparing health impacts across modes
- collaborating with health agencies
- measuring health equity.

The peer exchange summary report can be found at: http://www.planning.dot.gov/Peer/Arizona/scottsdale_6-20-14_performance_outcomes.pdf